



STICKNEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Stickney, Illinois 60402
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Fax (708) 795-1381



Lawrence P. Meyer, Fire Chief

Donald J. Tabor, Mayor

Date: October 2, 2000
Subject: Mercury Spill September 27, 2000 at 4216 S Maple alley rear
From: Larry Meyer, Fire Chief

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On September 27, 2000 at 1007 hrs Stickney Police radio operator C. Vitro received a phone call from [REDACTED], 4216 S Maple reporting an unknown quantity of mercury spilled in the rear alley behind his garage. Village fire chief Larry Meyer and Village supervisor James Kubinski responded to the scene with Stickney PD. The material was on the concrete pavement and was confirmed to be liquid elemental mercury in various size droplets covering an area approximately three feet in diameter. No container was found in the area.

[REDACTED] stated he was in the process of taking out the household trash at approximately 1000 hrs when he noticed the silver colored material and thought it was silver paint. When he got closer he recognized the mercury. [REDACTED] is a retired Stickney fire captain. [REDACTED] did not step in the material and stayed several feet away.

The area was immediately isolated with fire, public works and police assistance using barrier tape, cones and barricades. The alley was closed to all vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The parking lots behind the Harlem Ave. apartments were taped off also.

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRDGC), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) were notified by phone.

Pollution control officers from the MWRDGC arrived at 1030 hrs. They confirmed there was no danger of the mercury entering a waterway or sewer. A MWRDGC pollution control officer remained on the scene throughout most of the duration of the incident.

The MABAS Division 11 HAZMAT team was called but does not possess the specialized equipment or expertise to clean up a mercury spill.

The mercury spill was near a rolling dumpster owned by Crown Disposal of Brookfield. The company was contacted and a Mr. Anderson came to the scene. He confirmed that the dumpster was emptied early morning on Tuesday 9/26/00. [REDACTED] did not



notice the mercury on the afternoon of 9/26 while he washed his car on the garage apron, only several feet from where the spill was noticed. He was certain that he would have noticed the silver metal in the bright sun. A woman stated she walked her dog at approximately 0900 hrs on Wednesday 9/27 and fell in the area of the spill but did not see the mercury at that time. The woman and the dog were tested for mercury with none found. Based on this information, it was assumed that the spill occurred sometime between 0900 hrs and 1000 hrs on Wednesday 9/27.

Heritage Services of Lemont was called to act as the emergency response contractor. They could not respond because of involvement with the NICOR mercury clean up efforts. Heritage recommended Superior Services of Lemont, who was also not available to respond. Superior did have a standby crew From Marine Pollution Control (MPC), who was able to respond.

A three-man team arrived from MPC at approximately 1330 hrs and began clean up efforts using a HEPA vacuum. They vacuumed mercury in the spill area. The MPC personnel surveyed the entire alley and confirmed that vehicle tires had spread the mercury some distance north and south of the spill. Visual inspection and Jerome mercury vapor detectors confirmed that 42nd Street and 43rd Street and the adjacent sidewalks were not contaminated. Those streets were closed to provide a staging area and command post. MPC informed Chief Meyer that they could not complete the clean up since it would be extensive and costs not be covered by the emergency response agreement. They left the scene at approximately 2230 hrs.

At 1600 hrs Don Klopki IEPA arrived. He confirmed the seriousness of the spill and called for Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) assistance.

At 1700 hrs Charles Gebien, On-Scene Coordinator (USEPA) arrived. At that time he called the USEPA clean up contractor Furgeson-Harbour Incorporated (FHI) and the START team Ecology & Environment, Inc. (E&E).

At 1900 hrs Lee Wohlwend & Apama Kaul (IDPH) arrived passing out mercury information and begun testing residents shoes and homes for mercury contamination with a Jerome instrument. No contamination was found. Channel 7 arrived at this time also and was given a statement by Chief Meyer and Leo Rosales (USEPA).

Since children on the way to Home School at 4400 S. Home use the alley, the entire school was checked with negative results on the Jerome and visual inspection. This was completed at 2300 hrs. by E&E with SFD assistance. The school district superintendent was notified by phone and later released a statement to parents regarding the incident which is attached.

At 2230 hrs four teenage boys disregarded the barriers and barrier tape and entered the contaminated alley from the south. They were stopped and the shoes they were wearing were checked with a Jerome. The shoes were above permissible levels and confiscated.

The stocking-footed youths were driven home by SPD. The shoes were later decontaminated by FHI and returned to the owners on Friday 9/29/00.

Approximately 50 cars were parked in the parking lots behind the Harlem apartment buildings. The cars belonged to the residents of the apartment buildings. All cars in the lots were checked for contamination (tires and interiors) and removed from the area by owners. Stickney DPW used a Bobcat to remove concrete parking bumpers to create a roadway in the parking lots so those cars would not drive down the contaminated alley. The cars were removed so the area could be thoroughly checked and decontaminated and so the residents could use them. Removing the cars also aided in securing the exclusion zone. A few hot spots were found in the parking lots and cleaned up on Thursday 9/28 by FHI.

Mayor Donald Tabor and Police Chief John Zitek were present at various times throughout the three-day clean up.

At 2345 hrs the scene was secured by SPD uniformed cars at the north and south alley entrances, and crews left for the night.

Operations resumed at 0800 hrs Thursday 9/28. Chief Meyer arrived first and gave a statement to Channel 2, 5, 7, 9, Fox, CLTV, Tribune. Charles Gebien arrived and was also requested to give a statement to the media.

The clean up began after FHI and E&E personnel arrived and continued until 2000 hrs. The hot areas were vacuumed, treated with HG-X, vacuumed again, and then sealed with concrete sealer.

Two trash containers were found to have detectable mercury vapor levels. No elemental mercury was visible. The trash containers were emptied, the contents packaged for proper disposal, and the trash containers decontaminated.

Special Agents Eric Hann & Christopher Pullos USEPA Criminal Investigations Division and FBI Special Agents Leslie Lahr & Howard Kaeding arrived to conduct a criminal investigation.

Two IDPH teams with the assistance of D. Lenihan, Stickney Township health department screened 21 residences for mercury on Thursday 9/28. A list of people who feared they might be contaminated was collected. The listed people were or will be screened by IDPH. No mercury was found in the homes but one mother and child's shoes tested positive.

The area was again secured overnight by two uniformed SPD officers in marked cars, one north and one south.

On Friday 9/29 the alley, parking areas, dirt areas along the alley and the 4100 block alley were checked for visible signs of mercury and with the Jeromes. None was found.

One 55 gallon drum of high level mercury, five 55 gallon drums and one fiber drum of low level debris and PPE, and two 5 gallon buckets of decon water were labeled and removed by 1230 hrs by FHI and transported to Heritage Environmental in Lemont. By 1300 hrs all agencies and contractors left the scene. The parking lots and alley were reopened by 1330 hrs.

The USEPA CID and FBI were still conducting their investigation along with SPD.

Tom Baughman Ph.D. Environmental Toxicologist (IDPH) continued to screen residences with a Jerome. By the end of the day all residential screening was completed. Traces of mercury were found in one house at 4129 S Maple at 1430 hrs. This is where the mother and daughter shoes were found to be contaminated. However, the husband smokes and that can give a false positive reading on a Jerome. The home will be tested on Saturday, 9/30 with a Lumidor instrument, which is not effected by smoke.

The IDPH tested the [REDACTED] at 4129 S Maple on 9/30. Tests showed the carpet and vacuum cleaner were contaminated with mercury. [REDACTED] stated she did not use the vacuum since the previous weekend. The highest mercury level in the home was 30 nanograms, which is below the 300 nanogram level of concern. It is now suspected that the mercury may have been in the home prior to the spill in the alley one-block south and one alley to the west. Homes, yards and sidewalks adjacent to the spill tested negative.

IDPH and USEPA will follow up on the situation at the [REDACTED] home. The family was instructed to cover the carpeting with poly sheeting and get blood tests on Monday 10/02.

Captain Elias' SPD shoes were contaminated with mercury on Wednesday 9/27. They were decontaminated and returned to him on 9/29.

Attached are copies of business cards of persons who responded to this incident.

LYONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT 103

serving the communities of Brookfield, Forest View, Lyons, McCook, Stickney

Working Together To Expand Student Opportunities

MICHAEL E. MERCER
Superintendent
AMES S. RICH
Assistant Superintendent

*COPY TO:
ALL TRUSTEES
+
DEPT. HEADS
MAYOR DON
9/28/2000*

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DATE:	<u>9/28/00</u>
TO:	<u>Don Tabor, Mayor of Stickney</u>
COMPANY:	
FAX #:	<u>749-2742</u>

THE FOLLOWING CORRESPONDENCE CONSISTS OF 2 SHEETS, INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET.

COMMENTS:

FYIDOES THIS TRANSMITTAL SHEET WARRANT A REPLY? ☐ Yes ☐ No

SENT BY:

Kathy Smeltzer
Lyons Elementary School District 103

SCHOOL:

LYONS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT 103

Serving the communities of Brookfield, Forest View, Lyons, McCook, Stickney

Working Together To Expand Student Opportunities

MICHAEL E. MERCER

Superintendent

JAMES S. RICH

Assistant Superintendent



4100 Joliet Avenue
Lyons, Illinois 60534
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September 28, 2000

Dear Parents:

As you have probably heard, on Wednesday, September 27th a mercury spill occurred at approximately 9:15 a.m. in the alley east of Harlem, between 42nd and 43rd Streets in Stickney. Our students' safety is always a priority and that continues in this situation. I have been in constant contact with the Village of Stickney. Mayor Don Tabor has been working with the Federal Environmental Protection Agency. A representative of this agency was quoted as saying, "there was no contamination to any human."

Wednesday night at 10:30 p.m. Home school was tested for mercury contamination. **No traces of mercury were found.** It is the opinion of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency that no additional buildings need to be tested. Additionally, officials have talked to some children who live in the area to make sure they did not come in contact with the mercury.

We will continue to monitor the situation and keep you informed if any updates are needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael E. Mercer".

Michael E. Mercer
Superintendent

Protecting Our Water Environment

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

JAMES N. CHODORA

Pollution Control Officer II

Industrial Waste Division

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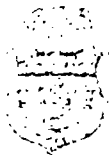
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